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# EXPANSION OF THE URANIUM MINES IN THE ELLIOT LAKE AREA

Response of the Government of Ontario  
to the  
Final Report of The Environmental Assessment Board

## PART I: COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

November, 1979



Ontario



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PART 1 : COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

Clerk of House

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## PREFACE

This is Part I of a two-part report presenting the Government of Ontario's response to the findings and recommendations of the Environmental Assessment Board in its final report on the effect of uranium mine expansions on the Elliot Lake area, which was tabled in the Legislature on May 28, 1979. Part I deals with those chapters of the Board's report concerned with the community assessment. Part II of the Government's response, concerned with mining operations per se, will be tabled shortly.

Recognizing the pressures of mining expansion on the local communities on the North Shore of Lake Huron, particularly the Town of Elliot Lake, the Environmental Assessment Board held a total of 74 days of sittings during the period between November 1977 and March 1979, following which it published a report on its findings and recommendations. This enabled the parties directly affected by these findings to proceed with plans for services vital to the rapidly growing community. The Board's report also gave the government an opportunity to undertake a comprehensive review of the situation in the light of these findings.

This report on community assessment is subdivided into sections which follow the same sequence as the chapter headings found in second section of the Environmental Assessment Board's final report. Included are responses to matters related to population and housing, hard services and the provision of social services.

The following is a list of Ministries that contributed toward this Government Response:

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Ministry of Correctional Services

Ministry of Education

Ministry of Energy

Ministry of Environment

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Housing

Ministry of Intergovernmental Affairs

Ministry of Labour

Ministry of Natural Resources

Ministry of Northern Affairs

Ministry of Transportation & Communications

Ministry of Treasury and Economics

Co-ordinated by the Provincial Secretariat for Resources Development.

## I     INTRODUCTION

The rate of community expansion at Elliot Lake is significant in both terms of population growth, relative to other communities in Northern Ontario, and its dependence on conditions in the uranium mining industry.

It is anticipated that as the result of expansions by Rio Algom Limited and Denison Mines Limited, the population of Elliot Lake by 1984 will have grown to 23,700 persons from 10,700 in 1977 -- with the population anticipated to reach 30,000 by 1988. While some growth is also expected in communities bordering the North Shore as a result of the expansion in Elliot Lake, the Government does not intend at this time to encourage their growth as dormitory communities.

The provincial government has monitored the rapid resurgence of the Elliot Lake area since the uranium mining companies signalled their intention to proceed with their plans for the expansion. Very early in this process the government was advised by the Municipality of Elliot Lake that Council would assume the responsibility for co-ordinating and putting in place the new community infrastructure that would be necessary to support the influx of people expected to be moving into the area as the mines expanded.

This decision by the municipal council represented a bold and unique opportunity for a resource-based community to assume responsibility as the developer, particularly in view of the

period of decline suffered in the early 1960s. The provincial government welcomed the initiative in the context of its policy to have municipal governments assume a greater role for the planning and administration of growth.

The government, in assessing its role in the expansion of Elliot Lake and the adjacent municipalities, recognized that problems could arise as the expansion proceeded, notwithstanding the proficient manner in which matters have been handled so far by local government. Consideration was also given to the scale of the expansion and the area's location in Northern Ontario. The hearings and subsequent report of the Environmental Assessment Board assisted greatly in focussing the government's attention on many of these problems, including the need to monitor the projected rate of growth, the potential for temporary housing shortages to occur during the expansion, and the impact of growth on communities along the North Shore. These factors dictated the need for all parties to the hearing to develop long-term planning strategies.

Having carefully reviewed the situation, the government has decided that the local municipalities have demonstrated the capability to manage growth and its effects to the extent that the Province's involvement should only be necessary if significant problems emerge. To ensure that such problems are anticipated the ministries directly involved with the expansion will continue to monitor the situation during the next few years until a measure of stability is achieved in the community. Should problems arise requiring provincial



involvement, the Ministry of Northern Affairs will co-ordinate the preparation of an appropriate course of action and will report to the Cabinet Committee for Resources Development if required. Otherwise Ministries will work with the municipalities and local agencies in the normal way.

In addition, the Government has decided on the following specific actions:

MINISTRIES WILL DIRECT THEIR FIELD OFFICES TO ENSURE REGULAR LIAISON IS MAINTAINED WITH ELLIOT LAKE AND NORTH SHORE COMMUNITIES TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL PROBLEMS REQUIRING PROVINCIAL INVOLVEMENT AND WILL REPORT ON SUCH PROBLEMS TO THE MINISTRY OF NORTHERN AFFAIRS.

THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING HAS ESTABLISHED AND IS CHAIRING A COMMITTEE INVOLVING THE TOWN OF ELLIOT LAKE, THE MINING COMPANIES AND OTHER LOCAL AGENCIES, SUCH AS THE DISTRICT HEALTH COUNCIL AND THE SCHOOL BOARDS, WHOSE FUNCTION IS TO EVALUATE DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS AND FORECASTS FOR THE ELLIOT LAKE AREA.

UNDER THE MUNICIPAL HOUSING STATEMENT PROGRAM, THE MINISTRY OF HOUSING HAS PROVIDED A GRANT TO ENABLE THE TOWN OF ELLIOT LAKE TO UPDATE ITS HOUSING POLICY STATEMENT. THE STUDY WILL FOCUS PRIMARILY ON THE NEEDS OF THE SERVICE SECTOR, AS WELL AS ON LOW INCOME GROUPS AND THE ELDERLY.

TO ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY OF SOCIAL FACILITIES, SUCH AS SCHOOLS AND HEALTH FACILITIES, WHEN REQUIRED, THE MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION AND HEALTH WILL CONTINUE TO CONSULT CLOSELY WITH THE APPROPRIATE LOCAL AUTHORITIES.

The following sections of the report are a detailed response to each of the recommendations made by the Environmental Assessment Board that directly affected Provincial Ministries.

## II POPULATION AND HOUSING

### Population Projections

The Board recommends that the Town and the Province require the companies to substantiate their employment forecasts and that these forecasts should be examined critically by the Town and the Province to ensure that they are realistic and up-to-date.

The Board recommends that the non-mining employment multiplier and the factors used in the population estimates be closely and frequently monitored by the provincial government with the assistance of the Town at least during the period of expansion. Furthermore, the Board recommends that female employment be incorporated in the forecasting methodology.

### Comment:

In the past, inadequate scrutiny of populating forecasts has major changes in the development schedule and the redesign of central water and sewage disposal facilities. In addition, lack of data respecting the ratio of mining to non-mining employment and the female participation rate has further weakened demographic forecasts and estimates of housing demand.

The Ministry of Housing will assume the responsibility for chairing an interministry group to work with the Town, the mining companies and other local agencies, such as the District Health Council and the School Boards, to monitor, update and coordinate all demographic forecasts in the Elliot Lake Area.

### Housing Problems

The Board recommends that the Town together with the Province develop a mutually acceptable program for estimating and alleviating any shortfall in housing and for ensuring that any unavoidable shortfall is not felt disproportionately by any sector of the community.

The Board recommends that methods be studied by the Town and the Ontario Ministry of Housing to make housing units more affordable for the non-mine, non-subsidized labour force. This study should examine the amount and the source of subsidies that would be necessary and forthcoming to achieve this goal.

The Board recommends that the Province of Ontario, along with the Town and mining companies investigate whether or not the percentage of lots in new town-site #2 allocated to the non-mining sector is adequate and what methods are available to ensure that this allocation is effectively taken up by this sector.

#### Comment

The mining companies and the Town have worked successfully to co-ordinate the production of new housing units and the expansion of the mining operations. However, the production of appropriate and affordable housing for the service has proved to be more difficult because of inadequate data concerning the incremental demand, the timing of demand, income ranges and other factors.

The full number of serviced lots being allocated by the Town for service sector housing has not been taken up, yet there is a calculated shortage of service sector housing. There are a number of possible reasons for this discrepancy:

- a miscalculation of demand or the timing of demand;
- a significant portion of employees in the service sector may be family members of mining employees and so already housed;
- available new housing may not be affordable;
- people may be accustomed to paying a relatively small proportion of their income for housing or to relatively low standards of housing.

Under the Municipal Housing Statement Program, the Ministry of Housing has proposed to the Town the updating of its Housing Policy Statement and has offered a grant for a housing study to focus primarily on the needs of the service sector, as well as on low income groups and the elderly.

#### Housing Approvals

The Board recommends that the province arrange its approvals process as it relates to Elliot Lake to ensure that a continuous supply of adequately planned accommodation is provided in this community to meet agreed upon housing requirements.

The Board recommends that the Town confer with the Ministry of Housing on an ongoing basis to ensure that it produces adequate documentation for the provincial review process.

#### Comment

The initiative for assuring a continuous supply of adequately planned accommodation lies with the Town of Elliot Lake. The government can only respond to requests for specific programs and to the submission of applications for approval. In this regard, the revision to the Municipal Housing Statement should assist the Town of Elliot Lake in identifying the appropriate housing program.

From the outset, the Ministry of Housing has given priority to expediting all approvals from Elliot Lake and the impact area and special staff have been assigned, from time to time, to deal with substantive problems such as low level radiation in the Elliot Lake townsite.

#### Mobile Homes

The Board recommends that the Town, in setting standards relating to the installation of facilities connected with mobile home parks, ensure that such parks are financially viable to establish and to operate.

The Board recommends that the Town continue as developer to make land available for mobile homes and rent lots for mobile homes on a planned basis.

Comment

The provincial government agrees that there is a role for mobile homes. It recognizes, however, that the cost of servicing mobile home lots in Elliot Lake may be such that it would be nearly as economical in the long term to build a permanent house as it would be to use the site for a mobile home. In any case, decisions respecting mobile homes are the responsibility of the Town.

### III HARD SERVICES

#### Effect of Population Forecasts

The Board recommends that the size of the water treatment plant be chosen to reflect realistic estimates of ultimate population as agreed to by the Ministry of Housing.

#### Comment

To assist the Ministry of the Environment in assessing applications by the Town of Elliot Lake for certificates of approval respecting water works, the Ministry of Housing has advised both the Ministry of the Environment and the Town's consultants of changes in the population forecasts.

#### Water Treatment Facilities

The Board recommends that the Ministry of the Environment approval relating to the design of the Town's water treatment plant system be amended to require the erection of a control structure to ensure that the level of Elliot Lake is adequately maintained.

#### Comment:

The final design of water treatment plant is still in preparation by the Town's consultant and, therefore, no amendment to the MOE preliminary approval is necessary. However, there is already a stop log control structure in place to control water levels in Elliot Lake. Therefore, further works may not be required.

### Impact of Accident on Elliot Lake

The Board is concerned that the reopening of the Stanleigh Mine and Mill and the potential effect of accidental waste emissions reaching Elliot Lake were not considered by the Town. The Board recommends that appropriate steps be taken in the design of this mine/mill facility to ensure that the quality of Elliot Lake remains suitable as a water supply for the Town.

### Comment:

The recommendation with respect to the reopening of the Stanleigh Mine and Mill can be addressed by the Atomic Energy Control Board and the Ministry of the Environment during the approval process which will be undertaken once the company's plans are sufficiently advanced. The province therefore endorse the principle of this recommendation and will emphasize its importance to the Atomic Energy Control Board.

### Contingency Plan

The Board Recommends that the Ministry of the Environment monitor the quality of Elliot Lake in general and the water intake in particular and develop a contingency plan that can be instituted on short notice if anything should occur that could threaten the quality of the water supply.

### Comment:

The Ministry of the Environment will monitor the water quality of Elliot Lake. With regard to a contingency plan, the Town of Elliot Lake will incorporate proposals to obtain emergency supplies from an alternative source (Gull Beak Lake) in the ongoing final design of the water treatment system. The Ministry will also review and advise the Town's consultant on this matter.

### Capacity of Sewage Treatment Plant

The Board recommends that the Sewage Works Approval Certificate No. 3-0702-001 (Exhibit 255) given by the Ministry of the Environment be expeditiously re-evaluated as to capacity in accordance with realistic population estimates as approved by the Ministry of Housing. The Town should then proceed as quickly as possible to construct a new sewage treatment plant, causeway and diversion all located on or near Esten Lake and thereby replace the existing two plants and the interim treatment plant for neighbourhood 3C.

### Comment:

The Certificate to which the Board refers is preliminary which means no specific action is required in that regard. The Ministry of the Environment has written to the Town's consultant and advised them that the plans for the sewage works should be re-evaluated because of the population change. This has been done and a final Certificate of Approval has been issued with designs based on the revised population estimates.

### Interim Sewage Plant

The Board recommends that the Certificate of Approval for the interim sewage treatment plant for neighborhood 3C have a condition attached whereby the plant must be closed by a specified date and that this date be as soon as is reasonably possible after the completion of the new sewage treatment plant.

### Comment:

The recommendation that the Certificate of Approval for the interim sewage treatment plan should have an additional condition attached is not possible once the Certificate of Approval has been issued. In the plans submitted with the application for approval, it was stated that this plant would



not operate after the new sewage plant was in operation which is expected within a shorter period than 5 years. Because the materials accompanying an application are binding on the proponent, no specific condition is required on the Certificate of Approval to require a limit of operation. Should the Ministry decide that the plant should operate for a shorter or longer period of time, this can be accomplished by means of an Order issued under The Ontario Water Resources Act.

#### Storm Drainage

Because of the interconnection of the waterways receiving runoff from Townsite #2, the Board recommends that there should be a monitoring program established by the Town and the province to ensure that the effects downstream are acceptable especially the effects on lakes and watercourses which are used or are to be used for recreational purposes.

#### Comment:

As the plans for the storm drainage system are still under design, it may be possible to divert storm drainage away from Esten Lake into Depot Lake downstream, where the sewage discharge is planned. In this case, no monitoring program is required. Failing that the Ministry would normally carry out such a monitoring program.

#### Solid Waste Disposal

The Board recommends that the Atomic Energy Control Board set out as soon as possible its concerns and criteria with respect to the use of abandoned tailings areas for solid waste disposal.

The Board recommends that the mining companies assist the Town both technically and financially in examining the use of Nordic or other abandoned tailings areas for the disposal of solid waste.

The Board recommends that the Town examine the waste disposal process "shredding" in conjunction with the use of a tailings or other area as an alternative to covering the disposal site by more traditional means.

Comment:

The recommendations dealing with solid waste are under review by the Regional staff of the Ministry of the Environment. The Ministry gave the Town of Elliot Lake an \$11,000.00 grant to study the five or six alternative sites to determine their feasibility for solid waste disposal. A site has been selected by Town's consultants and detailed site evaluation studies have been carried out. Therefore, the Town will be submitting an application to MOE to establish a facility and a hearing will be held by the Environmental Assessment Board under The Environmental Protection Act. The target to commence operation is the Summer 1980.

Aggregate Supply

The Board recommends that appropriate controls be established by the Province to ensure that aggregate used in the construction of neighbourhood 3C as well as new townsite #2 is properly tested for gamma radiation and for radon generation potential to ensure that it is suitable from the viewpoint of radioactivity.

Comment:

The Ministry of Labour considers its present testing procedures to be adequate. The testing of sand, gravel or shale is not considered to be a reliable way of testing the constituents of aggregate because the radioactive elements tend to occur in pockets rather than uniformly. The aggregates are therefore tested as finished concrete rather than in the loose state. At present, when concrete is poured for a building, two sample cylinders are made for stress after seven and twenty-one days. These cylinders are sampled for radioactivity (gamma) since this is the only practical way of dealing with the problem.

#### IV SOCIAL SERVICES

##### Social Planning Council

To help identify social needs brought on by the expansion and to co-ordinate the provision of social services in Elliot Lake, the Board recommends that a social planning council be organized by the Ministry of Community and Social Services at an early date.

The Board recommends that the mining companies be asked to assist in the funding of this social planning council.

##### Comment:

Social planning councils are generally organized as the result of local initiative, rather than by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. That Ministry would therefore be willing to provide advice to such an initiative should local social organizations agree to co-ordinate their efforts on behalf of the community by forming a council. Should a council be formed the Ministry of Correctional Services had indicated its willingness to participate. The Ministry also suggests the desirability to include a review of justice related programs in its terms of reference.

##### Community Information

The Board recommends that an information centre be established by the Town to help new arrivals to Elliot Lake, in areas such as provision of housing, information on health and education and the availability of social services and amenities in the community. This centre should also be available to receive the concerns or questions of new citizens and to relay these to the appropriate authorities.

Comment:

The provincial government agrees, and in so doing, notes the efforts of the Town and local organizations in developing and publishing a community information booklet advising newcomers and established residents of the community services that are available to them.

Education

The Board recommends that a mechanism be established by the province to monitor closely unique areas, such as Elliot Lake, to ensure the adequate provision of educational facilities during the period of rapid growth.

The Board recommends that the Ministry of Education consult on an ongoing basis with the Town's planners to ensure that permanent educational facilities are put in place on an anticipatory rather than reactive basis.

The Board recommends that consideration be given by local Board's of Education and the Town to planning school facilities in such a way that they can double for other community related purposes, such as library, sports and recreational facilities.

The Ministry of Education responds to demonstrated need for school facilities as indicated to it by the school boards having jurisdiction in any area including Elliot Lake. The Ministry does not commit funds before a need is confirmed.

This Ministry agrees with the first recommendation of the Board that a mechanism be established to monitor closely all the growth areas such as Elliot Lake and affirms that this mechanism is already in place and in the case of Elliot Lake is being well handled by the North Shore Board of Education and

ADDENDUM

Page 17 following 3rd paragraph

The Ministry of Education is co-operating with both local school boards to ensure that elementary and secondary educational services will be adequate. Discussions with these boards have been thorough and detailed, and have included attention to adequate accommodation.

Provision for post-secondary education is being made by Sault College of Applied Arts and Technology. It has selected a site in the new Porridge Lake townsite and has engaged consultants to carry out the required environmental assessment and application to the Ministry of the Environment for approval. A 20,000 square foot building is envisaged, with adequate parking.

the North Shore District Roman Catholic Separate School Board with the co-operation and assistance of the Ministry's Regional Office in Sudbury.

The Ministry points out that the first part of the second recommendation is the responsibility of the local school boards and that the matter is being handled in a satisfactory manner. The second portion of that paragraph is dealt with in the preceding paragraph.

With regard to the third recommendation, the Ministry's position is that where possible facilities in schools be planned in such a way as to be used for community related purposes out of school hours.

This Ministry, therefore, re-affirms the position taken at the hearings that the provisions of school facilities in Elliot Lake is being well handled by the local school boards and the regional office in the light of today's economic realities. This Ministry will continue to work closely with the local school boards to ensure that all of the children in the Elliot Lake Community are adequately provided with facilities for their education.

#### Health Services

The Board recommends that the government should immediately reconsider its policy of not providing capital funding before 1981 and make special allowance for the hospital in Elliot Lake should it be required.

Comment:

The Ministry of Health has agreed to support a detailed study of the health needs of the area including requirements of the hospital in Elliot Lake.

The problem in funding a capital project at the hospital in the immediate future is that all of the Ministry's capital funds, at least up to 1981, have already been committed with the exception of limited funds for the correction of hazards, economic investment and energy conservation. However, should the study demonstrate an urgent need to provide capital funds for the hospital before 1981, every effort will be made to secure them.

The Board recommends that a statistical health profile of the community be commenced by the local health units with the help of the Ministry of Health to identify problems and requirements in the health field and that the results of this study be made available to the public.

Comment:

The Algoma District Health Council, in consultation with the local health care agencies, will explore the feasibility and scope of co-ordinating a "community health profile". The Ministry of Health will provide whatever data it can to assist should the Health Council proceed with the "profile".

V OTHER MATTERS

Industrial Diversification

The Board recommends that a task force composed of representatives of the Town, the province, the mining companies, and the Chamber of Commerce be established immediately to examine whether an industrial diversification strategy for Elliot Lake can be developed and, if so, to develop one. This task force should examine whether the appointment of an industrial commissioner would be effective in this regard and, if so, what specific duties should be given to this person.

The Board recommends that this task force render a report within six months and that this report should serve as a basis for future industrial and commercial planning in this area.

Should Depot Lake, which is to be the receiving body for the effluent from the proposed sewage treatment plant for the whole Town of Elliot Lake be used as a water supply for the industrial park, the board recommends that adequate treatment be incorporated to ensure acceptable water quality.

Comment:

The government, through the Ministry of Industry and Tourism would welcome the opportunity to participate in the work of a task force should one be formed. It is understood the Town has initiated a feasibility study into the prospects of establishing an industrial area and that such a report would be used as the basis of a strategy for industrial diversification. It is recognized, however, that the development potential of the Elliot Lake area is, and will continue to be, largely determined by the expansion of mining activity in the area.

Should further studies be undertaken on the development of an industrial area, the Ministry of the Environment recommends a requirement to investigate the type of industrial activity to be allowed with respect to the amount of water used by each.



This can significantly affect the design of the sewage and water systems which are dealt with in the third recommendation of this section.

#### Adjacent Communities

The Board recommends that the Province of Ontario develop a regional plan for the North Shore area including Elliot Lake. This regional plan should include consideration of the extension of Highway 555 from Blind River to Elliot Lake taking into account the anticipated number of persons that will be working in the Elliot Lake area in the foreseeable future.

#### Comment:

During the past five years, the Provincial Government has undertaken, financed or has provided technical assistance for studies that have taken into consideration the regional implications of mining expansions in the area. These studies include:

- The Report of the Task Force on the North Shore;
- An Official Plan Amendment covering Townsite #2 in Elliot Lake;
- Report to the Environmental Assessment Board: Possibilities for Accommodating Population Growth;
- Blind River Area, Local Government Study;
- An Official Plan for Blind River and North Shore Improvement District;
- A Growth Strategy for Blind River;
- Growth Prospects for Spanish, Massey and the North Shore area.

With regard to the consideration of extending Highway 555 from Blind River to Elliot Lake, the Ministry of Transportation and

Communications notes that these studies prepared on this subject and submitted to the Environmental Assessment Board include analyses of the transportation implications of expansion at Elliot Lake. These reports also state the reasons why the extension of Highway 555 is not considered realistic at this time. In view of these analyses, the need for further traffic analysis, is not deemed to be necessary at present. Since receipt of the Board's report, the Government has received and is considering a brief prepared by elected representatives of North Shore Communities seeking action on transportation and communication policies. The recommendations of the brief relate to the need to improve transportation links within the corridor from Sault Ste. Marie to Sudbury, and the links between the corridor and other parts of Ontario, to serve the needs of economic development in this part of Northeastern Ontario.

#### Adjacent Communities

The Board recommends that the development of the Town of Blind River should be encouraged by the province to give individuals an option to living in Elliot Lake. This option should be encouraged whether or not a decision is made to proceed with a Highway 555.

#### Comment:

It is not agreed the Government should encourage people who work in Elliot Lake to live in Blind River or the other communities within commuting distance. So long as Blind River and the other communities experience no expansion of their industrial base, the Government will permit these communities to grow to their servicing limits as demand is manifested.



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